

A Chicago Chevy dealer can build you a streetable Camaro with a whoppin' 450-hp 427 powerplant

By Howard Pennington

YOU SAY YOU want a hot Camaro? And you say that the 350-cube Camaro isn't enough for your torrid taste? Not even the recently announced 396-cubic-inch version that will put out 325 horses?

Tell you what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna introduce you to Dick Harrell, High Performance Manager of Chicago's Nickey Chevrolet, world's largest stovebolt dealer. If you want a Camaro that will snap your ears back into the rear seat when you punch the pedal, he's the man to see.

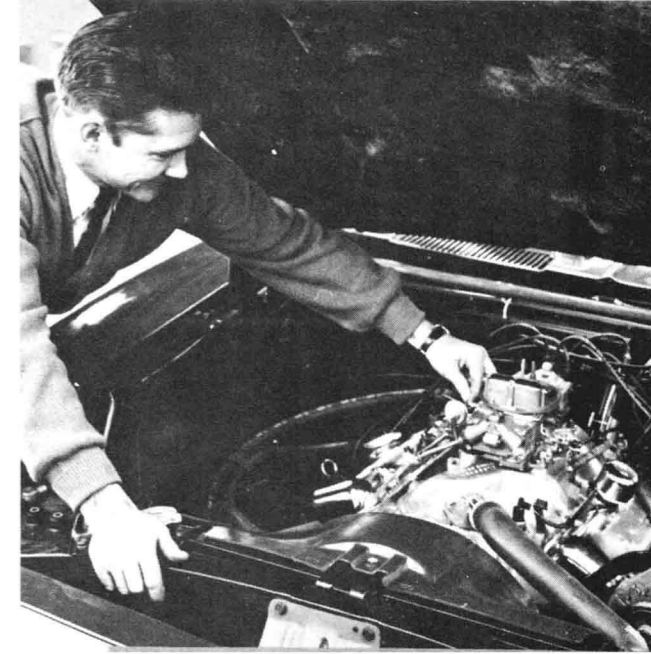
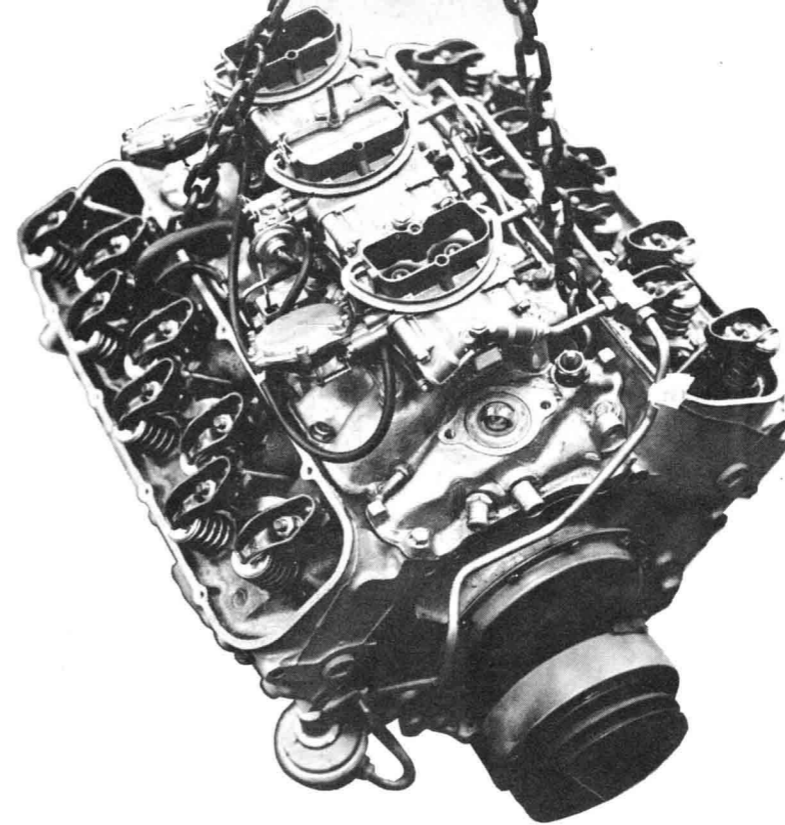
Dick Harrell's Performance Department at Nickey can supply you with special kits to improve per-

formance on a standard 327 or 350 inch Camaro. More importantly, they will custom build one to suit your desires, with power options ranging from a 400 horsepower, tri-power solid lifter version all the way up to a 427 cubic inch mill with two four-barrel carbs putting out 450 prancing ponies!

It's no secret that Chevrolet brought out the Camaro as an "answer" to Ford's tremendously successful Mustang. But many Chevy lovers felt the factory hadn't done quite right by them, performance-wise, when it turned out that the hottest engine available from the factory would be the 350 cubic inch job, especially when Ford kicked off the 1967 model year by offering a 390-cubic-incher in the Mustang.

But Dick Harrell and the guys at Nickey didn't waste much time fret-

Dick Harrell points out features of Nickey converted Camaro to prospective customers in high performance shop.



LEFT—Shown here is the Nickey Tri-power version which is 427 cubic inches and is rated at 435 hp. ABOVE—Harrell makes an adjustment on the single 4bbl version that is rated at 425 hp. BELOW LEFT—A completed Nickey Camaro was demonstrated at local drag strip, drew much attention. Regular street versions are not normally equipped with headers unless ordered.



ting about the foul fate the factory had dealt them. Instead, they eyed the sizeable stock of 427-inch Chevy engines they always keep on hand. Then they threw open the hood of a Camaro, checked out the engine compartment with a tape measure, and let out a small cheer. Those potent 427's would fit!

This was OPPORTUNITY. If the factory wouldn't make a really hot Camaro, Nickey Chevrolet would.

And so the Nickey Camaro was born. Actually, the Nickey Camaro is not just one model, but several, as noted earlier. There is a 396-cubic-inch version, with three two-barrel carbs (tri-power) and solid lifters, that dynos at 400 horsepower. For the really serious performance fan, of course, Nickey uses those potent 427's. (Getting an ample supply of this engine seems to be no problem for Nickey, world's

largest Chevy dealer.) In order to fit everyone's wants and wallet, they decided to make three basic versions of the 427 available. A Nickey Camaro buyer can get a single 4-barrel carb model rated at 425 horses, a tri-power version with 435 hp, or a really, really hot model sporting a pair of four-barrel carbs and punching out 450 horsepower. (All have solid lifters.)

For your cash, check or money order, you also get positraction, a heavy duty radiator, 4-speed wide ratio transmission or 3-speed Turbo-Hydramatic, heavy duty clutch, chrome valve covers and chrome air cleaners. Also special Cragar mag wheels, either 14" or 15" size (5" wide), that say "NICKEY CAMARO" on the hubs. (That ought to win you quite a few match races by default right there.) Firestone 7" Wide Oval tires are also part of the setup, along with a few other things that we will hit as we go along.

Since the engine is the big news about the Nickey Camaro, let's take a look at what Nickey drops under the hood after pulling the factory-installed mill out of a 350 SS Camaro to transfer the car into a 450-horse Nickey Camaro.

While some changes are made in the 427 engine, many things are kept stock. They keep the stock bore (4.25") and stroke (3.76") on the basic 427. The block is neither modified nor O-ringed. Oil passages stay stock, although the oil pump be-

comes Super Duty. The crank is balanced, polished and cleared by C-T Automotive of North Hollywood, California, and checked for straightness. Thrust clearance is .008".

Connecting rods are steel Super Duty Chevrolet rods, shot peened and Magnafluxed, with Clevite 77 rod inserts and main bearings. Rod insert clearance is .002" and main bearing clearance is .003".

Pistons are forged Chevrolet Super Duty with a compression ratio of 12½ to 1. Molybdenum piston rings have a minimum end ring gap of .035", and there is piston-to-wall clearance of .008".

Special camshafts open the valves, either Bill Thomas or Sig Erson, grind #RR550. Both intake and exhaust duration are 310°, with both new intake lift and net exhaust lift measuring .565". Nickey chrome moly pushrods work with stock steel rocker arms. Retainers are aluminum and dual valve springs are used.

Valves and cylinder heads are stock and the heads are not ported or polished. Stock head gaskets are copper coated.

According to Dick Harrell, the carbs used are specially made Nickey 4-barrel pots.

The stock distributor is run at 40° total advance, with Packard 440 wire leading the juice to Champion N-3 spark plugs. Special Bill Thomas 4-tube headers take care of the

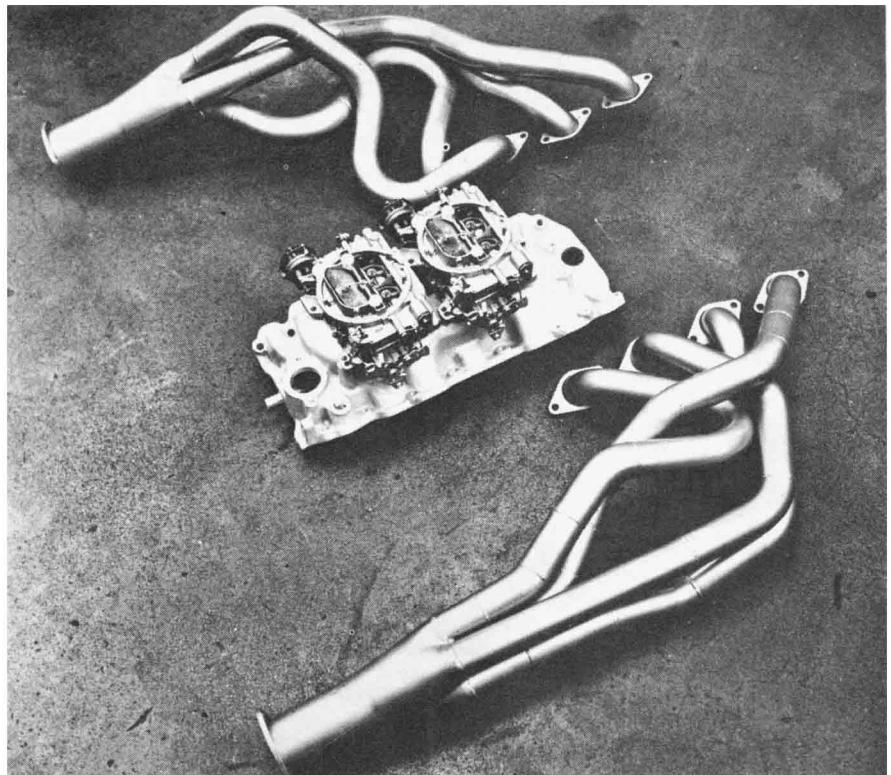
YAVOOM!!!!

exhaust.

Before this potent power package is placed under the hood, which can be fiberglass with the '67 Stingray scoop if you like, the front end is reworked a bit to properly handle the 80 additional pounds that the 427 engine carries. Heavy duty motor mounts are used. Minor adjustments have to be made in the steering column because of the large valve covers on the 427 mill.

A heavy duty steel Hays clutch and flywheel assembly is also put into position before the 427 is snugged down in its new home.

After the engine is securely in place, there is a lot of minor but important work to be done under the hood, such as installing the plug wiring, running gas lines to the carbs, altering the throttle linkage,



installing fan and alternator belts, changing radiator hoses for the newly installed heavy duty radiator, and modifying the clutch linkage.

Heavy duty shocks are placed on the stock suspension, front and rear, and Nickey/Bill Thomas traction bars are bolted to the front half of the springs, to still allow some chassis movement.

Brakes can be either heavy duty metallic drums or disc type.

One of the points Dick Harrell stressed was that they don't have just one certain way of creating a Nickey Camaro from a 350 SS

Camaro.

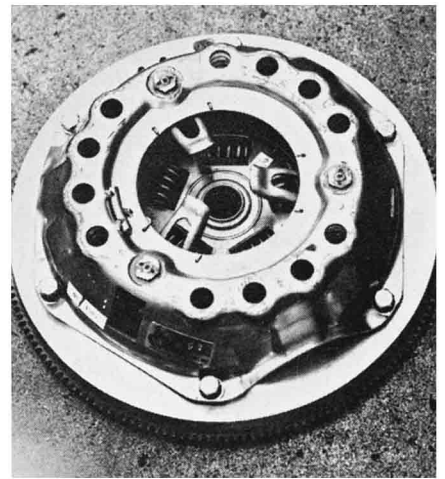
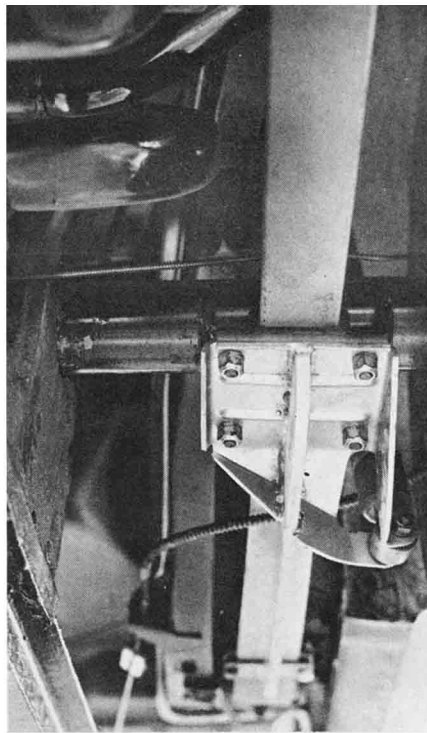
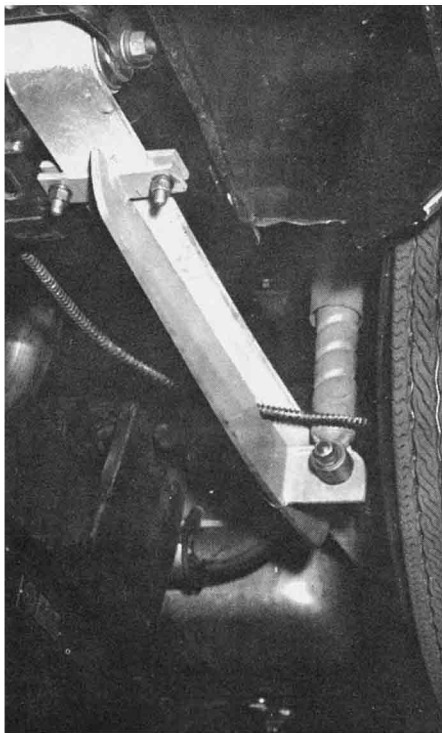
"We'll help the customer select the proper equipment for his particular use," Harrell stated. "Maybe he wants the car for strip only, maybe for just street use, or perhaps for some combination. All that makes a difference when it comes to choosing things like traction bars, camshafts, headers, clutches, and the like. Special custom engine work may be requested. Whatever the customer's needs are, we can build a Nickey Camaro that's custom made for him."

How have the nation's Chevy lov-

TOP OF PAGE—Headers and dual quad manifold are the basic ingredients of the 450 hp Nickey package. These items represent about 70 additional horsepower. ABOVE—Camaros on display at Nickey Chevrolet.

ers responded to the Harrell-Nickey answer to the challenge of the 390 Mustang, the 383 Barracuda, and other hot new models?

"We got hundreds of inquiries by letter and phone just as soon as we announced the Nickey Camaro," said Harrell. "More importantly, we got a dozen firm orders almost at once."



FAR LEFT & LEFT—Special traction bar is bolted to front half of single leaf rear spring to prevent wrap-up. Bar also provides attachment point for shock. Traction bar bolts to spring mounting pad, extends forward and clamps to leaf. ABOVE—Heavy duty Hayes clutch assembly is shown bolted to Camaro flywheel.

Since the Nickey Camaro was first announced, Chevrolet decided to make the 396 cubic inch engine available in the Camaro, starting about mid-January, as you may know. I asked Dick Harrell if he felt this would hurt the sale of the Nickey Camaro much.

"It hasn't slowed down our orders noticeably," he answered. "The factory-installed 396 engine will no doubt be the 325 horsepower edition, and our customers are looking for more performance than that. Of course the factory 396 is a good engine, and it will certainly satisfy the needs of the average driver."

"How long does it take from the time you receive an order for a Nickey Camaro until the car is ready for the buyer?" was my next question.

"We try to keep a couple of street

versions in stock all the time," Harrell answered. "We have a good supply of Camaros on hand to build from, and if a guy chooses one of these to start with, he can get his Nickey Camaro in three days. If a car has to be ordered in specially it may take a couple of weeks, at most. Most of the little kinks that we first ran into have been overcome, and the cars can be made ready rather speedily now."

In line with their policy of getting a buyer into his new Nickey Camaro as soon as possible, Nickey Chevrolet will pick up his airplane ticket for a flight into Chicago to drive the car home. (Nickey Chevrolet recently joined forces with Bill Thomas Race Cars in Anaheim, California, and buyers from the western part of the country get their Nickey Camaro from there.)

The first person to get a Nickey Camaro was Roy Witz, from the Chicago area. Witz, who owns and drives a double-A fuel dragster, went the whole performance shot and got himself a 450 horsepower job.

It's not known at this writing just how NHRA and NASCAR will classify the Nickey Camaro for drag racing competition, but it is legal for AHRA Super/Stock class.

In whatever class it ends up, it should make for some supergood competitive racing, with lots of Chevy fans cheering it on.

And so, friend, you say you want a hot Camaro? Tell you what you oughta do. You oughta take a good long look at the Nickey Camaro. It's 450 horsepower in a 3300 pound car, or about 7 1/3 pounds per horsepower. THAT is a hot Camaro. ■

BELOW—Two Nickey Camaros go at it at Chicago area drag strip. Various versions will compete in different classes, form a strong line-up at the drags. RIGHT—Package includes Cragar wheels with special hubcaps proclaiming the car as a Nickey Camaro.

